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The Genius Loci of Chinese Manuscripts

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# INHALTSVERZEICHNIS – TABLE DES MATIÈRES CONTENTS

## "THE GENIUS LOCI OF CHINESE MANUSCRIPTS"

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ing from Sanskrit. In verse 22 (p. 65) we find *tvayā vyāptam idaṁ sarvaṁ / jagat sthāvarajaṁgamam* // rendered "By you, this All, / the [living] world that either stands still or moves about, is pervaded." Is it not simply "You pervade this whole world of the animate and inanimate"?

A final point concerns the secondary sources upon which the author draws for her study. Out of the extensive bibliography listed in the larger volume, the author refers to a mere ten works in Japanese, of which six are dictionaries, one a Japanese grammatical gloss on the Chinese sūtra (*kakikudashi* 'translation'), one an art catalogue, one a book-length study of the sūtra (rarely referred to), and one an article (putatively by the author herself). If indeed she can read Japanese (and it appears that she lives in Japan), one might expect that she could have made use of the extensive Japanese scholarship on her central theme and related topics. In particular, for example, Iyanaga Nobumi has published extensively (also in French) on the transformation undergone by Indian deities in their journey eastward to Japan. Since this is a theme of interest to the author, covered according to her in the unpublished portion of her doctoral thesis, one might have expected to find even here some reference to the fact that such themes have been studied before. This absence reinforces the impression that the book should be seen more as a collection of sources than as a synthetic analysis or interpretative summa.

Despite what seem to be rather harsh critiques of these two works offered above, it should be stressed that in fact both are very valuable, and should be consulted by anyone with an interest in Sarasvatī, needless to say, but also Indian goddesses, and of course the *Suvarṇabhāsottama* in particular, and Chinese translations of Indian texts more generally as well. Whether those with broader interest in the Vedas, Epics, Purāṇas or Indian art history would be likely to be as well rewarded seems slightly less clear.

Jonathan Silk

MIDDENDORF, Ulrike, *Resexualizing the Desexualized: The Language of Desire and Erotic Love in the Classic of Odes*. Pisa and Roma: Accademia Editoriale, 2007. ISSN: 0392-4866. 281 S.

*Resexualizing the Desexualized* is a study of the language of desire and erotic love in the form of euphemism in the *Classic of Odes*. The author's goal is to

survey the basic vocabulary of eroticism in the poems through an analysis of metaphor and metonymy. It is an ambitious task because of the remoteness of the texts in both time and social horizon. The author admits that many of her conclusions are ultimately unverifiable, but nevertheless introduces a depth of erudition that is rare and astonishing. Ulrike Middendorf's background includes linguistics, psycho-linguistics, cognitive psychology, not to mention the fields of sinology, mythology, and Chinese and European literature and literary criticism. Parts of the book will dazzle readers; other parts will leave them unable to judge, the conclusions being simply too speculative. But the author's effort is always well argued and fascinatingly presented.

The first chapter presents a range of sources not usually found in one book, which can only betoken many years of study and preparation. Concerning the *Classic of Poetry*, the author describes the early process of moralization and historicization of the poems, but insists on the existence of other readings that gave rise to a double hermeneutics. She assembles evidence to support the notion of euphemism as the core hermeneutic method for unraveling the meaning of the poems. She defines euphemism based on a wide range of sources as referring in general to the preservation of self-image and the manipulation of language in a way that implies more than can be explicitly stated. There is a subversion of "optimal relevance" by way of "consciously hiding difficult matter", the purpose of which is to avoid offending and to maintain respect for the audience (p. 35). There is also an aesthetic goal, which is particularly important in the case of sexual content, which as readers know have been studiously and at times preposterously controlled in traditionally accepted interpretations of the *Classic of Odes*, hence Middendorf's "resexualization" of the poems. Her tools of analysis consist of a set of metaphors and metonymies that name thematic domains and image schemas, all of which refer to recurring patterns of human experience in the poems. She uses capital letters to label the themes, e.g., LOVE IS A NATURAL FORCE (FLOOD, WIND, STORM, FIRE, p. 46), which act as rubrics under which she organizes her interpretations.

I found the second chapter to be the most useful. It is an expert study of the "literal and figurative language of sexuality in early and early medieval Chinese literature" (p. 8). The author focuses on medical and sexological texts from Mawangdui, from which she compiles a glossary at the end of the book. Many of the terms in those texts are problematic (such as the interesting word *zui* 最, for example, as a possible reference to the penis as an organ that "accumulates" and "assembles", as in sucking in the woman's essence during intercourse). She breaks the language down into categories such as genitals, intercourse, and emo-

tional states. For her core categories, she employs the set of conceptual metaphors and metonymies referred to above, such as THE PENIS IS A MALE ANIMAL, which contains sub-metaphors such as THE PENIS IS A BULL or a CROWING COCK. Thus we have *mu* 牡, 'the male', 'bull', *tu* 兔, 'male rabbit', or *mingxiong* 鳴雄, 'crowing cock', or MALE AQUATIC ANIMAL, e.g., *gui* 龜, 'turtle' (pp. 67–68). In contrast, THE FEMALE GENITALS ARE AN ANIMAL includes MAMMALS, *ma* 馬, 'horse', and *pin* 牝, 'the female animal', or THE FEMALE GENITALS ARE PLANTS, such as the internal depths of the vagina in the Mawangdui called *gu shi* 穀實, 'grain fruit', and *mai chi* 麥齒, 'wheat teeth' (p. 79).

Once Middendorf establishes the basic semantic range and categories, she then proceeds to the *Classic of Odes* itself. Her goal is to provide a framework for the "anatomy of desire and sexual love in the *Odes*", for which she uses ten subheadings: 1) beautyscapes and sexual exemplars, 2) gazes, fetishes, fantasies, and dreams, 3) waters, wombs, and desirous women, 4) fruit trees, creepers, and plant pickers, 5) mountains, tall trees, and phallic icons, 6) weapon bearers and carriage drivers, 7) rapers, hunters, and hungry men, 8) margins, spaces, and places, 9) atmospheric phenomena and weather, and 10) homoerotics (some of which derives from Friedrich Bischoff's controversial but also fascinating work *The Songs of the Orchis Tower*). I will provide a sampling of interpretations to give an idea of the results of Middendorf's research, some of which are quite plausible, some as I said extremely speculative.

For the famous first poem of the "Airs", for example, the images of picking and plucking seem, as Middendorf says, to euphemize sexual activity, as in "to the left, to the right, one plucks them" 左右芼之 (p. 127). But linking the verb *mao* 芼 etymologically to a technical term in the Mawangdui text *Yangsheng fang* 養生方 meaning to "remove the (pubic) hair" is perhaps an interpretation that not many scholars will be willing to accept – the author herself only suggests such a meaning. In general, I take such interpretations as the sign of a bold willingness that does no harm. Some of her examples allow for what we might call a safe translation followed by a daring one, as in "Oho! Beautiful he is, / the clear forehead is lovely", for which her "tentative" translation is "Oho! Enrapturing beauty, / his essence rises to abundance". Here, for example, she takes the line 清揚婉兮 and rereads *qing* 清 as *jing* 精, essence (though I am representing only a small portion of her interpretation of this poem; *Mao* 106, p. 136). These examples fall under the rubric of "beautyscapes and sexual exemplars". Under "waters, wombs, and desirous women", we have "The bream has a red tail, / the royal chamber is like a blazing fire", 魴魚赬尾, 王室如燬 (*Mao*

10), for which Middendorf plays off the sexual metaphors in the first two stanzas of the poem, "water, branches, stems, shoots, and hunger", to derive an interpretation of the "fish, fishtail, chamber, and fire" in the third stanza. Thus "red (erect) tail" is "the male member in arousal", whereas "royal chamber" is the "bedroom, or vaginal channel, like 'blazing fire'" (p. 155). Under "fruit trees, creepers, and plant pickers", we have "Ge tan" 葛覃 (*Mao* 2), "The Kudzu Expands", which portrays successful intercourse: "How the kudzu expands, / it spreads into the middle of the valley, / its leaves are luxuriant. / The yellow birds go flying, / they settle on the lush trees, / they sing in unison" (p. 168). Though sexual imagery is missing from the surface, the author thinks we can take the spread into the middle of the valley as the "happiness of consummation", which is mirrored by the birds singing. The birds flying, moreover, is like "merry lovemaking," as based on the metonymic concept of "MOTION FOR SEXUAL INTERCOURSE" that she has introduced previously. Under the category of "atmospheric phenomena and weather", we have the poem "Feng yu" 風雨, "Wind and Rain" (*Mao* 90), which perhaps alludes to unsuccessful intercourse and even dysfunction. The traditional interpretation is that the poem expresses longing for a noble man who remains true even in an age of disorder. The re-sexualized version of the poem offers the notion that the opening lines, "Wind and rain are cold, / the cock crows wildly," or the words of the second stanza, "Wind and rain are chill, / the cock crows [in a] frenzy" (where I have added the words in brackets) refer to "stimulation and ejaculation" that are cold and chilled. The cold wind further refers to arousal without involvement, as in the situation of the man aroused but the woman sad or unreceptive. Cold rain perhaps even refers to "cold semen", which signifies infertility and inability to impregnate the woman (pp. 185–186). The above is a mere digest of examples found in the book; again, my representation fails to evoke the complexity of Middendorf's exegesis.

A further test of the author's approach might be to apply her methods to other works such as the *Lyrics of Chu*, *Chu ci* 楚辭, or even the erotic poetry of someone like Li Shangyin 李商隱. First, are there commonalities between the *Odes* and the *Lyrics of Chu*, and, second, what is the history of euphemism between the *Odes* and someone like Li Shangyin? The study of euphemism in general in China is a rich field (it is also tied to reticence, a highly cultivated type of behavior that still rules in the realm of sex and love in China). Even the supposedly most explicit texts like the art of the bedchamber evoke an overarching atmosphere of sex as ritualized behavior, which is one of the most fascinating features of these ancient texts. Ritualization is a form of euphemism and

sublimation. Sex as ritualized act constitutes sex as something controlled and choreographed, such that cultured sex always prevails over animal nature. The texts are written from a male perspective, with the man being the main one who is in control. This also means that he is the one who easily loses control, as literature and history for centuries of Chinese history have portrayed. I would still like to understand more about the context of the bedchamber texts (who read them; how widespread were they) and why they did not end up side-by-side with texts like the *Book of Rites*, which they parallel in so many ways. Perhaps the simple answer is that using things like euphemism to ritualize or domesticate the so-called animal nature of sex cannot achieve the desired effect. Sexual desire, no matter what culture or era, represents a zone of taboo, where taboo and prohibition (as in rules against illicit sex) are simply no more than attempts to control the uncontrollable.

Keith McMahon

SHITAO. *Aufgezeichnete Worte des Mönchs Bittermelone zur Malerei.* Aus dem Chinesischen übersetzt und kommentiert von Marc Nürnberger. Mit 20 Abbildungen ausgewählt und erläutert von Helmut Brinker. Mainz: Dietrich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2009. ISBN 978-3-87162-068-3. 270 S.

Shitao ("Stein-Woge") ist einer der dreissig Künstlernamen des um 1630 geborenen chinesischen Malers. Die Themen des bildnerischen Gestaltens hat der Sinologe Dr. Marc Nürnberger übersetzt und kommentiert. Die Erläuterungen zu den zwanzig Abbildungen stammen von Professor Dr. Helmut Brinker, dem bekannten Experten für chinesische und japanische Malerei und Plastik.

*Kugua Heshang huayulu* – "Aufgezeichnete Worte des Mönchs Bittermelone zur Malerei" sind in achtzehn Absätze gegliedert:

> 1. Absatz: "Der All-Eine-Pinselstrich". Shitao definiert diesen Begriff minutiös; er postuliert: "Die Menschen vermögen mit Hilfe des All-Einen-Pinselstrichs alles zu umfassen, selbst restlos das, was jenseits der äussersten Ränder der Welt liegt." Shitao veranschaulicht die zahllosen Positionen beziehungsweise Bewegungen des Pinselstrichs und fasst sie in Richtlinien.
> 2. Absatz: Hier wird dargelegt, dass die Alten die Richtlinien nicht als gegeben betrachteten und sie zu ihrer Zeit auch nicht davon eingeschränkt wurden. Der Kommentar hält die paradoxe Formulierung von Shitao fest: "Diese Richtlinie ist keine Richtlinie – wird schlechthin zu meiner Richtlinie."